

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, in my heart few things are more sacred than the solemn promises that we have made to our veterans, because all of us today would not be able to enjoy the peace and prosperity we have without the sacrifices of our veterans.

Unfortunately, the President's budget proposal completely fails our veterans yet again by breaking the health care promises made to them years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud that legislation has been introduced which corrects the administration's appalling oversight and restores adequate health care benefits that were promised to and earned by our veterans.

The Keep Our Promises Act is a bipartisan bill which will finally fulfill the commitment we made to our military retirees. We need to protect the future of veterans' health care. We need to protect those who have paid the ultimate sacrifices for this country.

I encourage our colleagues to support our Nation's veterans by supporting the Keep Our Promises Act. It is the least we can do, for all that they have done for us.

□

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair announces that he will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Any recorded votes on H.R. 3557 and H.R. 3642 will be taken after debate has concluded on these motions.

Record votes on remaining motions to suspend the rules will be taken at a later time.

□

PRESENTING CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL TO JOHN CAR- DINAL O'CONNOR

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3557) to authorize the President to award a gold medal on behalf of the Congress to John Cardinal O'Connor, Archbishop of New York, in recognition of his accomplishments as a priest, a chaplain, and a humanitarian.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3557

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds the following:

(1) His Eminence John Cardinal O'Connor is a man of deep compassion, great intellect, and tireless devotion to both spiritual guidance and humanitarianism.

(2) John Joseph O'Connor was born on January 15, 1920, in southwest Philadelphia, the son of Thomas J. O'Connor and Mary Gimple O'Connor.

(3) John Cardinal O'Connor joined the Navy Chaplains Corps in June 1952 during the Korean Conflict, served with elements of

both the Navy and the Marine Corps, and saw combat action in Vietnam. He later served as chaplain of the United States Naval Academy and was appointed as Chief of Chaplains of the Navy with the grade of rear admiral, from which position he retired four years later, in May 1979. He was ordained a Bishop by Pope John Paul II on May 27, 1979. He then served as Vicar General of the Military Ordinariate (now the Archdiocese for the Military Services) until 1984.

(4) John Cardinal O'Connor became Bishop of Scranton, Pennsylvania, on May 10, 1983, was named Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of New York on January 31, 1984, and was elevated to the rank of Cardinal by Pope John Paul II on May 25, 1985.

(5) John Cardinal O'Connor has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to public and parochial school education. He has supported and strengthened Catholic schools in their mission to provide a quality education to students of all races, ethnic backgrounds, and religions in the Archdiocese of New York and throughout the Nation.

(6) John Cardinal O'Connor has provided comfort and care to the sick, the elderly, and the disabled and provided millions of people with spiritual and emotional support. He led the effort to open New York State's first AIDS-only unit at St. Claire's Hospital, remaining a frequent visitor and volunteer at the hospital.

(7) Throughout his life, John Cardinal O'Connor has also served on behalf of the poor and the oppressed, as exemplified by his assistance on behalf of famine victims in Ethiopia and victims in war-torn Bosnia-Herzegovina.

(8) Throughout his career, John Cardinal O'Connor has been a strong advocate of interfaith healing and understanding, particularly among individuals of the Catholic and Jewish faiths, and has played a significant role in helping to establish diplomatic ties between the Vatican and Israel.

(9) John Cardinal O'Connor took the inspiring words of the Declaration of Independence—"Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness"—and transformed them into a statement of purpose. He has dedicated his life's work to protecting and defending these inalienable rights of all people.

(10) John Cardinal O'Connor celebrated his 80th birthday on January 15, 2000, and has displayed remarkable courage and the true power of his faith in carrying on his life's work in the face of life-threatening illness.

SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.

(a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The President is authorized to present, on behalf of the Congress, a gold medal of appropriate design to John Cardinal O'Connor, Archbishop of New York, in recognition of his accomplishments as a priest, a soldier, and a humanitarian.

(b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purpose of the presentation referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the Treasury (hereafter in this Act referred to as the "Secretary") shall strike a gold medal with suitable emblems, devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the Secretary.

SEC. 3. DUPLICATE MEDALS.

Under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in bronze of the gold medal struck under section 2 at a price sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery, overhead expenses, and the cost of the gold medal.

SEC. 4. NATIONAL MEDALS.

The medals struck under this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United States Code.

SEC. 5. FUNDING AND PROCEEDS OF SALE.

(a) AUTHORIZATION.—There is hereby authorized to be charged against the United States Mint Public Enterprise Fund an amount not to exceed \$30,000 to pay for the cost of the medals authorized by this Act.

(b) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—Amounts received from the sale of duplicate bronze medals under section 3 shall be deposited in the United States Mint Public Enterprise Fund.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BACHUS) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. LAFALCE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BACHUS).

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. BACHUS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, today we honor a great American, the Cardinal of New York, John O'Connor, a spiritual leader who has been guiding the 2.3 million Catholics in the Archdiocese of New York for 16 years, and millions more in the Navy and Marines as a chaplain for 27 years.

The Cardinal endured military combat when he was called to minister to those entrusted to his care on the battlefields and in the jungles of Vietnam. A general from the Third Marine Division in Vietnam said of him, "No one was more effective in sustaining for all Marines of any religion a particular morale."

Cardinal O'Connor has been more than a spiritual guide for Catholics. He has served as a witness of Christ in his love for others and his heroic stance against moral decay and in his personal relationship with Christ. Above all else, his love for God has been the motivation for his love for all other persons.

His love for others has led him to reach out to those with physical disabilities. He has stood with disabled persons and their caregivers and supported them as cherished members of the church. In doing so, he has made them more visible, and the result often is greater acceptance and inclusion on the local level.

He has reached out to those suffering from alcoholism and emotional illness.

□ 1115

In the early 1980s, he opened the first treatment center exclusively for AIDS patients in a New York City hospital.

His love for the truth has led him to preach lively and clearly against offenses to human dignity. A reoccurring theme of the Cardinal's preaching is that each person has immense value and dignity. That dignity is rooted in our relationship to God being made in his own image.

The Cardinal has preached against hatred based on race or religion, against the abuse of women, against the destruction of the unborn, and against injustice in the political and judicial system. His stands against racism are as strong as his outspokenness